

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (93) in DH CDB/9/12/5 Pt.1

22 February 2023

Dear Principal / Person-in-charge,

Latest Situation of Outbreaks of Upper Respiratory Tract Infection

We are writing to update you on the latest situation of upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) outbreaks in Hong Kong and would like to remind you to maintain vigilance against respiratory tract infection at school.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has recently received increased reports of school/institutional URTI outbreaks. A total of 23 URTI outbreaks affecting 165 persons were reported in the recent one week (from 14 to 20 February), compared to 7 URTI outbreaks affecting 79 persons recorded in the previous week (from 7 to 13 February). Majority of the outbreaks (65.2%) occurred in kindergartens/child care centres, while around one-fourth of the outbreaks had cases with specimens tested positive for respiratory syncytial virus.

Young children, elderly people and patients with chronic diseases are prone to respiratory tract infection and its complications. As schools are collective assembly places, infectious diseases could easily spread among people through daily contacts. Sources of infection could come from staff, visitors or students (especially those having active symptoms). In this regard, you are urged to reinforce preventive measures in your institution so as to mitigate the impact of respiratory tract infection.

To prevent outbreaks of respiratory tract infection, schools should actively check the body temperature of all students every day when they arrive at school so as to identify students with fever. Staff should also check their temperature before work every day. Students and staff with fever or respiratory illnesses should not be allowed to attend school. They should wear a mask and seek medical attention promptly.



We would like to draw your attention, in particular, to measures on temperature screening, hand hygiene, mask wearing, as well as the parts related to meal arrangement and physical activities, etc. For detailed information on monitoring of body temperature, please refer to Section 2.3 of the “Guidelines on Prevention of Communicable Diseases in Schools / Kindergartens /Kindergartens-cum-Child Care Centres/ Child Care Centres”, published by the CHP.

The following measures are advised to prevent respiratory tract infection:

- Surgical mask can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Avoid touching one’s eyes, mouth and nose;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub as an effective alternative;
- Cover the nose and mouth with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly into a lidded rubbish bin, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.
- Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

You may wish to refer to the CHP’s guidelines on proper hand hygiene and proper use of mask, which are accessible at the CHP webpage <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/460/19728.html> and <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/460/19731.html>; and video clips produced by the CHP on personal and environmental hygiene, which are available under “Video Demonstration” section of “Infection Control Corner” at the CHP website (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/resources/346/index.html>):

If you notice an increase in fever/respiratory illnesses among children/ students, clients or staff, please report promptly to the CHP's Central Notification Office (Tel: 2477 2772; Fax: 2477 2770). The CHP will conduct epidemiological investigation and provide advice on necessary prevention and control measures.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'SK CHUANG', written in a cursive style.

(Dr. SK CHUANG)

for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health